

# SAFETY AT SPORTS GROUNDS

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## SUMMARY

This is the annual report to inform the Committee of the action taken by officers in respect of the Council's responsibilities under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987. The Committee is asked to provide any comments, before submission to the relevant Cabinet Member for approval.

## RECOMMENDATION

**That the Committee note and provide any comments on this report, which will then be sent to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services for approval.**

***NB. The Committee may wish to draw their attention to Appendices A&B. Following any comments, it will be recommended to the Cabinet Member that officers maintain the same level of inspection of sports grounds during 2012, as was undertaken in 2011.***

## REASONS FOR OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

The Council is the enforcing authority under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987. Following the publication of Lord Chief Justice Taylor's final report in January 1990 in respect of Hillsborough disaster, the Council decided to review its inspection and reporting regimes in respect of enclosed sports grounds located within the borough. A meeting was then arranged with the other agencies involved with safety at sports grounds, these being the Metropolitan Police Service, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and the London Ambulance Service. This group is known as the Safety Advisory Group (S.A.G.). The S.A.G. identified the enclosed sports grounds detailed in Appendix A as premises that should be inspected at least once a year.

This year, a representative from the Food Health & Safety Team accompanied the S.A.G on the inspections as Health & Safety Officers are able to serve improvement notices under the Health & Safety legislation where necessary. This was also part of the recommendations given by RESPOC in 2010.

## Alternative options considered and rejected

To increase, decrease, or maintain, the same level of safety inspections in 2012 that were conducted in 2011

## INFORMATION

1. Following Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations after the Bradford City fire and the Hillsborough Stadium disaster, local authorities were advised to review their arrangements for discharging their responsibilities under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987. In addition, local authorities were advised to ensure that an accountable structure was in place, whereby the enforcing department/personnel were regularly and effectively supervised by Senior Officers who would then report direct to Elected Members on the action instigated. The object is to ensure that Senior Officers and Elected Members are fully aware of the action being instigated on their behalf in discharging the Authority's duties.
2. The principal instruments aimed at achieving a framework for safety of spectators at sporting events are:
  - a) Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975
  - b) The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987
  - c) The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (5<sup>th</sup> edition Department of Culture, Media and Sport).
3. The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 makes provision for the safety of stands at sports grounds. It requires the local authority to issue a 'Safety Certificate' in respect of covered spectator stands which accommodate 500 or more people. There is only one stand within the London Borough of Hillingdon's boundaries which comes into that category which is the North Stand at Hayes Football Club.
4. The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 makes provision for safety at sports stadia and other sports grounds. It governs the issue of safety certificates in respect of "designated sports grounds". It is for the Secretary of State to set the criteria for designation and in the case of football grounds the trigger spectator capacity for designation is 5,000. For other sports stadia it is 10,000. The Act also empowers a local authority to issue a Prohibition Notice in respect of all or part of any sports ground, irrespective as to whether or not it is a "designated" ground, where it feels that spectators cannot be accommodated safely. The legislation also requires the local authority to consult the police and fire authorities in respect of safety at sports grounds within their boundaries. It also places a duty on the Council to conduct periodic inspections of any "designated" sports ground and at any sports ground at which there is a regulated spectator stand which is subject to a Safety Certificate.
5. None of the sports grounds listed in Appendix A are 'designated' and are therefore not subject to a safety certificate. However, if the Council or a member of the Safety Advisory Group were of the opinion that the unrestricted admission of spectators to a ground for a particular game or event could present a significant safety risk, then the Council would have a duty to use its powers under Section 10 of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 to serve a 'Prohibition Notice'. The Prohibition Notice would stipulate the number of people that the Council has determined that could be safely accommodated within the sports ground.
6. The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds advises the managers/owners of sports grounds to consult with the Local Authority, the Fire Brigade, the Ambulance Service and the

Metropolitan Police in regard to safety issues. In order to ensure good liaison between all the responsible authorities, the Council required the Licensing Service to organise the Safety Advisory Group inspections and to co-ordinate the input, observations and advice from each authority, which is then to be transmitted in a single communication to the managers/owners of the sports grounds. The Licensing Service Manager acts on behalf of the Council as the Senior Liaison Officer for the Safety Advisory Group.

7. Whenever the Licensing Service, or any member of the Safety Advisory Group, becomes aware of a particular game or event that may attract large numbers of spectators (normally in excess of 1,000), the Licensing Service Manager contacts the club's officials to request that they submit their risk assessments, emergency contingency plans etc for consideration and approval prior to the proposed event. If time permits, the Licensing Service will convene a meeting of the Safety Advisory Group at the ground to discuss the club's proposed safety plans/arrangements. The Licensing Service then, on behalf of the S.A.G, advises the Club's management team of any additional safety precautions that they require to be implemented to ensure the safety of the spectators. In addition the S.A.G inform the club's management team of the maximum number of persons who may be admitted into the stadium/ ground.
8. If the Safety Advisory Group were concerned that the Club's management were not going to follow their advice, the Licensing Service Manager would be requested to issue a 'Prohibition Notice' on behalf of the Council. The Licensing Service Manager would report back to the Deputy Director of Public Safety to seek his instruction as to whether or not a notice under section 10 of the Sports Grounds Act 1975 should be issued.
9. The Licensing Service Manager has consulted with the Council's Health & Safety team in respect of each Sports Ground and a number of inspections have been conducted with Officers of that team present. The Health & Safety team can use their own powers to enforce any findings of the SAG.
10. The procedures and inspections detailed in this report and as set out in Appendix A are considered as reasonable and correct in discharging the Council's responsibilities under the afore-mentioned legislation. These procedures and inspections were implemented in 2011.
11. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services will be asked to decide whether to maintain these procedures and inspections in 2012. Alternatively, the level of inspections can be increased, or decreased.

## Conclusion

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services will be advised that the inspection and reporting regimes as detailed in Appendix A would appear to comply with the recommendations and guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

## **Financial Implications**

The recommendation to approve the report and action taken has no direct financial implications beyond the existing budget allocations, given that previous levels of inspections are being maintained.

## **Legal Implications**

Members will note from the contents of the report that the Council is responsible for regulating the safety of sports grounds. There are two pieces of legislation which govern this area. Both Acts impose a duty on the Council to carry out periodic inspections of the grounds to ensure that they are complying with the requirements of the legislation.

As indicated in the report, officers are required to advise Members of the inspections they carry out. This requirement stems from guidance which was issued following inquiries into the Bradford Stadium fire and the Hillsborough Stadium disaster.

If the Council failed to carry out inspections of the relevant sports grounds it would be in breach of its statutory duties under these two pieces of legislation covering this area.

## **EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT**

When required (as set out in Appendix A, see item 3) the following authorities are consulted:-

The Metropolitan Police Service  
The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority  
The London Ambulance Service

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

### **Published**

Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975  
Interim Report on Hillsborough Stadium Disaster  
Final Report on Hillsborough Stadium Disaster  
The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987  
The Safety of Places of Sport Regulations 1988 (SI 1988/1807)  
Home Office Circular 11/1990  
The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (5<sup>th</sup> edition issued by the Department of Culture Media and Sport)

### **Not published**

The annual committee reports on this subject to the relevant committees from June 1987.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Standard Procedures Currently In Place under The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and The Fire Safety And Safety Of Places Of Sports Act 1987**

1. The following enclosed sports grounds are inspected once a year and recommendations are made to the management of each club on measures that they should implement to improve safety. Brief details of each club are set out in Appendix B.
  - AFC Hayes (formally know as Brook House) Football Club
  - Gaelic Athletic Association sports ground
  - Harefield Football Club
  - Hillingdon Athletics Stadium
  - Hillingdon Borough Football Club
  - Northwood Football Club
  - Uxbridge Football Club
  - Wealdstone (formally Ruislip Manor) Football Club
2. The Hayes FC site is being redeveloped for housing after the merger of Hayes and Yeading Football Clubs in 2009 to Hayes & Yeading United FC. The ground at Beaconsfield Road, Hayes is currently being redeveloped to be the new home for Hayes & Yeading United, due for completion late 2012. Meanwhile, the team have relocated to a ground in Surrey.
3. Whenever it becomes known that a larger than average number of spectator (normally over 1,000) may be attracted to a special game/event, then the Licensing Service Manager contacts the S.A.G. representatives from the Fire Brigade, the Metropolitan Police Service and the Ambulance Service to seek their requirements. The S.A.G.'s requirements/recommendations are then communicated to the club's management committee. If necessary, enforcement action is instigated to ensure the safety of the spectators who may be attracted to that particular game/event. This procedure is also implemented whenever Uxbridge Cricket Club is used for "special" matches that attract large numbers of spectators e.g. when Middlesex County Cricket Club stage 20:20 games at the ground.
4. Whenever possible, an officer from the Licensing Service attends the special game/event to ensure that the Safety Advisory Group's requirements/recommendations are being implemented.
5. In addition, when considered necessary, an officer from the Licensing Service inspects any temporary electrical installation, spectator stands and/or marquees that have been erected in respect of such a "special" sporting event, to ensure that they are safe and will not put the public at risk.

### **Reporting Procedures**

- a) The Council's Licensing Services Manager is responsible for ensuring the matters detailed above are implemented and she reports directly to the Deputy Director of Public Safety.

- b) An annual report is prepared by the Licensing Service Manager and it is then submitted to the Deputy Director of Public Safety for approval.
- c) Once approved by the Deputy Director, the report is submitted to the Residents Policy Overview Committee, for consideration and approval.
- d) Following scrutiny by RESPOC, the report is passed to the Cabinet Member for Environment for formal approval on behalf of the Council.

## APPENDIX B

Guidance in regard to the safety of spectators at sports grounds is detailed in the publication **Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds** (Green Guide). This publication has 20 chapters and contains 223 pages of very detailed specific safety requirements. The following is just a very brief resume of each ground. If required, full detailed information on each ground can be obtained from the Licensing Service.

### **AFC Hayes Football Ground**

This ground is not suitable for large numbers of spectators in that it does not have:-

- a) An emergency lighting system.
- b) A public address system with a secondary source of power.
- c) A suitable alternative means of escape route
- d) Crush barriers.

### **Gaelic Athletic Association's Sports Ground**

This ground does not have:-

- a) An emergency lighting system.
- b) A public address system.
- c) A suitable purpose made alternative means of escape route.
- d) Crush barriers.

In addition to its normal weekly games the ground is usually used once a year for a "special" game between two professional Gaelic Football Clubs. Such games normally attract approximately 3,000 to 4,000 spectators. Prior to this "special" match, the club notifies the Licensing Service's Manager who then consults members of the Safety Advisory Group.

Following consideration of the club's safety proposals by the SAG, the Licensing Service's Manager notifies the club of any additional safety measures that may be required in order to safe guard the large numbers of spectators that are to be accommodated within the ground.

Whenever possible, a Licensing Officer attends the match to monitor the number of spectators present and to check that the S.A.G.'s safety requirements are being implemented.

### **Harefield Football Club**

This ground could accommodate about 1,000 spectators. However, additional safety measures should be implemented in the event of a game that would attract that number of people.

- a) The public address system is not to the required standard.
- b) The installed emergency lighting system is limited and does not cover all the public areas
- c) Crush barriers have not been installed.

### **Hillingdon Athletics Stadium**

The stadium's public address system does not have a secondary source of power.

The stadium does not have a designated alternative means of escape route for spectators and participants should the main/exit route not be available (e.g. a suspect package in a car parked immediately in front of the main entrance to the stadium).

Note:- Whenever the stadium is used for an event that attracts a large number of participants and spectators, such as a combined schools sports meeting, then the Sports and Leisure Team and Fusion (the stadium managers) inform the Licensing Service who then meet to agree the maximum accommodation number and the additional safety provisions.

### **Hillingdon Borough Football Club**

Exit A and Exit B are located immediately adjacent to the main social club-house building, consequently a fire or suspect package would effectively take out those two exit routes.

Exit C is remote from the social club-house, however this alternative means of escape pathway is routed up to, and adjacent to, the social club-house.

The installed public address system does not have a secondary source of power.

The ground has not been provided with crush barriers.

The ground is in a general state of disrepair.

### **Northwood Football Club**

This ground is not suitable for large numbers of spectators in that it does not have:-

- a) An emergency lighting system.
- b) A public address system with a secondary source of power.
- c) The main entrance/exit to the ground, and the alternative means of escape from the grounds are not clearly identified..
- d) Crush barriers have not been installed.

Occasionally this ground is used for a "special" game that attracts many more spectators than the normal league games, for example, Northwood sometimes play a pre-season friendly match against a Championship side and such games attract large numbers of spectators. On being notified that such a match is to be played, the Licensing Service Manager will contact the other members of the Safety Advisory Group in regard to what additional safety measures should be implemented and then those requirements are passed onto the club's management committee.

### **Wealdstone (formally Ruislip Manor) Football Club**

This ground is not suitable for large numbers of spectators in that it:-

- a) Does not have an emergency lighting system
- b) Does not have public address system with a secondary source of power.
- c) Crush barriers have not been installed.

In addition the changing rooms, the refreshment hut and all the outbuildings are constructed from wood which poses a potential fire risk.

A number of pre-season friendly matches are normally played at the ground and these are sometimes Championship teams. When this occurs and in accordance with the agreed procedure between the club and the Licensing Service, the Licensing Service's Manager is notified and (if time permits) he will convene a meeting of the SAG to obtain their requirements/recommendations.

If possible a Licensing Officer will attend the match to monitor the number of spectators admitted into the ground and to check to see if the S.A.G's recommendations are implemented.

### **Uxbridge Football Club**

This ground is not suitable for large numbers of spectators as it does not have:-

- a) A comprehensive emergency lighting system
- b) The public address system does not have a secondary source of supply.
- c) Crush barriers have not been installed.

### **Notes:-**

The safe accommodation of spectators depends on all the factors, set out in the **Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds** document. Particular consideration must be given to each individual ground's infrastructure such as the pitch perimeter fence, the structural stability of walls and fences, the disposition and size of exits and the experience, competency and training of the management team and stewards.

All the above clubs are advised to consult with the Licensing Service's Manager/Safety Advisory Group before they stage any match that will attract more than the normal match day numbers.